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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ VISIT TO FRANCE: HOSTAGES SOLE FOCUS OF GOF

REF: A. A) SECSTATE 157182

[1](#)B. B) SECSTATE 154674

Classified by Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt  
for reason 1.4(d)

(C) 1. POL M/C conveyed to French Presidency November 16 U.S. interest in using the upcoming Chavez visit to convey French and international concern about proposed changes to Venezuela's constitution (along lines set out in refs). Presidency America's advisor Damien Loras, while stating that the GOF has concerns about some of the proposed amendments, said that the French side would focus on one issue with Chavez, that of the hostages held by the FARC, including Ingrid Betancourt. Loras explained that President Sarkozy had invited Chavez to France with one single objective in mind -- to improve chances for the release of those hostages.

The GOF wants to show that it did not regard this as a normal visit in which the range of issues of bilateral interest would be addressed.

(C) 2. Loras, who stated that Ambassador Vimont had set out France's approach to D/NSA Ansley November 17, allowed that if the Venezuelan side raised other issues such as the constitutional referendum, the French would make their views known. However, they would not take the initiative to discuss any issue other than the humanitarian one.

(C) 3. Although the French approach appeared set, Loras said the U.S. demarche would be shared with others in GOF (including Diplomatic Advisor Levitte) and taken into account.

(U) 4. On November 15, Poloff also delivered ref B points to Lionel Paradisi, MFA desk officer for Venezuela.

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